

To: Jones, Marjorie[Jones.Marjorie@epa.gov]; McDonald, Michael[McDonald.Michael@epa.gov]
From: Mattas-Curry, Lahne
Sent: Thur 1/16/2014 8:13:31 PM
Subject: RE: On second thought, pregnant women shouldn't drink contaminated West Virginia water, CDC says

I think what happens is that scientifically things may be true.

No adverse affects below 1ppm.

But most humans (me included) don't know what that means or whether my water has that or not.

In HSRP, there's actually a report, that they did with water utilities about how to communicate during a crisis/contamination.

In general, people do ONLY want to know if they can drink their water and not die or get cancer or whatever.

They don't want to hear about all the scientific info.

They want to know and understand if their family will be safe if they drink the water.

We aren't there yet, it seems, by what's below.

I also saw on twitter this morning, a million and a half pics from WV residents showing what their water looks like with captions that say "would you drink this?" and that they saw WV authorities say it's safe to drink. It looked nasty. Mustard yellow in fact.

And social media will get you in a crisis. So, you have to be very savvy – also something that HSRP is looking at for risk communications and responding in times of crisis. They are looking at the Boston bombings and the social media response of the police during that time. Along with some other things. It's not easy to communicate in crisis. However, the Tylenol incident is in every PR book ever written for being the absolute best model for crisis communications. Problem is, that happened in the 70s. Average age of the press officers is probably 27 LOL.

Anyway, here's the research:

http://cfpub.epa.gov/si/si_public_record_report.cfm?dirEntryId=240476&fed_org_id=1253&address=nhsrsc/si/&view=desc&sortBy=pubDateYear&showCriteria=1&count=25&searchall='Risk%20communication'%20OR%20'message'%20mapping'

From: Jones, Marjorie

Sent: Thursday, January 16, 2014 3:06 PM

To: McDonald, Michael

Cc: Mattas-Curry, Lahne

Subject: On second thought, pregnant women shouldn't drink contaminated West Virginia water, CDC says

This is why drinking water communications are a nightmare. The public are annoying in that they just want a 'yes/no, safe/not safe' answer, and they don't want to think....but on the other side, these kinds of seemingly contradictory notes are why they just throw up their hands and buy bottled water. Or give up.

So--- West Virginians were told to go ahead and drink their water. Except then the CDC back pedaled and said that maybe pregnant women shouldn't. (which should beg the question about whether others have sensitivities who shouldn't either). But if you read the notice, pulled in below, it says that pregnant women maybe shouldn't, but then at the end says, 'but we really don't expect adverse effects below 1....'

So which is it? If we don't know, we should just say we don't know – and accept the consequences that people aren't going to want to drink it if we don't know. But we don't want to say that.

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2014/01/16/1270072/-Okay-to-drink-West-Virginia-water-If-you-re-pregnant-maybe-not-the-federal-CDC-advises-belatedly?detail=facebook>

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WATER ADVISORY FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

The West Virginia Bureau for Public Health advises, after consultation with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) this evening, that the CDC recommends—out of an abundance of caution—that pregnant women drink bottled water until there are no longer detectable levels of MCHM in the water distribution system. However, the CDC re-affirmed previous advice that it does not anticipate any adverse health effects from levels less than 1 ppm.

Guidance from the CDC is attached.

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